

REMARKS

Claims 1, 3-10, 12-15 and 22-29 are all the claims presently pending in the application. Applicant respectfully cancels claims 2 and 11 without prejudice or disclaimer as these allowed features have been incorporated into independent claims 1 and 10, thus placing these independent claims in form for immediate allowance.

Applicant gratefully acknowledges the Examiner's allowance of independent claims 5 and 14. Applicant also gratefully acknowledges the Examiner's allowability of dependent claims 3-4, 12-13, 22 and 23. Claims 25-29 stand rejected on informalities under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph. Claims 25-29 have been amended in a manner believed fully responsive to all points raised by the Examiner. Claims 1, 6-10, 15 and 24 stand rejected on prior art grounds.

Claims 1 and 6-9 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Sato (U.S. PG-Pub. 2003/0067564 A1). Claims 10, 15 and 24 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over the admitted prior art in view of Nakayama (U.S. Pat. No. 6,201,586 B1).

These rejections are rendered moot by incorporating the allowable subject matter of claims 2 and 11 into independent claims 1 and 10, respectively.

It is noted that the amendments are made only to more particularly define the invention and not for distinguishing the invention over the prior art, for narrowing the scope of the claims, or for any reason related to a statutory requirement for patentability.

It is further noted that, notwithstanding any claim amendments made herein, Applicant's intent is to encompass equivalents of all claim elements, even if amended herein or later during prosecution.

I. FORMAL MATTERS AND CONCLUSION


In view of the foregoing, Applicant submits that claims 1, 3-10, 12-15 and 22-29, all the claims presently pending in the application, are patentably distinct over the prior art of record and are in condition for allowance. The Examiner is respectfully requested to pass the above application to issue at the earliest possible time.

Should the Examiner find the application to be other than in condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to contact the undersigned at the local telephone number listed below to discuss any other changes deemed necessary in a telephonic or personal interview.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any deficiency in fees or to credit any overpayment in fees to Attorney's Deposit Account No. 50-0481.

Respectfully Submitted,

Date: 7/9/04


Fredric J. Zimmerman, Esq.
Reg. No. 48,747

McGinn & Gibb, PLLC
8321 Old Courthouse Rd., Suite 200
Vienna, Virginia 22182
(703) 761-4100
Customer No. 21254